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**MAILED**

**DEC 20 2010**

**OFFICE OF PETITIONS**

In re Application of :
Joseph H. Martin :
Application No. 10/726,223 : ON PETITION
Filed: December 1, 2003 :
Attorney Docket No.

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed September 27, 2010, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply to the restriction/election requirement mailed December 22, 2008, which set a shortened period for reply of one (1) month from its mailing date. No response was received within the allowable period, and the application became abandoned on January 23, 2009. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed September 4, 2009.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)[1] must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,[2] unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

The instant petition lacks items (1) and (3).

**The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.**

"In the specialized field of patent law, . . . the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical

[1] As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

[2] In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

statutory and regulatory provisions. The Commissioner's interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference."[3]

"[T]he Commissioner's discretion cannot remain wholly uncontrolled, if the facts **clearly** demonstrate that the applicant's delay in prosecuting the application was unavoidable, and that the Commissioner's adverse determination lacked **any** basis in reason or common sense."[4]

"The court's review of a Commissioner's decision is 'limited, however, to a determination of whether the agency finding was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.'"[5]

"The scope of review under the arbitrary and capricious standard is narrow and a court is not to substitute its judgment for that of the agency."[6]

**The standard**

"[T]he question of whether an applicant's delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account."[7]

The general question asked by the Office is: "Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?"[8] Nonawarness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.[9]

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[3]Rydeen v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff'd without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir.1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg 849 F.2d 1422, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) ("an agency' interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference"); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defence Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) ("if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.")

[4]Commissariat A L'Energie Atomique et al. v. Watson, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 126 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (emphasis added).

[5]Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987) (citing Camp v. Pitts, 411 U.S. 138, 93 S. Ct.1241, 1244 (1973) (citing 5 U.S.C. §706 (2)(A)); Beerly v. Dept. of Treasury, 768 F.2d 942, 945 (7th Cir. 1985); Smith v. Mossinghoff, 217 U.S. App. D.C. 27, 671 F.2d 533, 538 (D.C. Cir.1982)).

[6]Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608, 34 U.S.P.Q2d (BNA) 1786 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing Motor Vehicles Mfrs. Ass'n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 463 U.S. 29, 43, 77 L.Ed.2d 443, 103 S. Ct. 2856 (1983)).

[7]Id.

[8]See In re Mattulah, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

[9]See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D.D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawarness of PTO rules does not constitute "unavoidable" delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without the assistance of counsel.

**Application of the standard to the current facts and circumstances**

In the instant petition, petitioner maintains that the circumstances leading to the abandonment of the application meet the aforementioned unavoidable standard and, therefore, petitioner qualifies for relief under 37 CFR 1.137(a). In support thereof, petitioner asserts that the negligence of the attorney of record led to the abandonment of the application.

With regard to item (1), petitioner is required to file a response to the election/restriction requirement mailed December 22, 2008. A copy of the Office action is enclosed for petitioner's convenience. The response must accompany any renewed petitioner filed or a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a).

With regard to item (3), the unavoidable standard requires that petitioner establish, by evidentiary showing, all relevant persons acted reasonably and prudently relative to the prosecution of the application and despite their actions the application was unavoidably abandoned. At the time of the abandonment of the application, power of attorney was granted to Donald W. Meeker and the petition makes clear that it was Mr. Meeker's responsibility to file a response to December 22, 2008, Office action. Accordingly, it is largely Mr. Meeker's actions or inactions that must be examined relative to whether the delay in responding to the Office action was unavoidable. The renewed petition should be accompanied by statements or other documentary evidence that affirmatively establishes the cause of the abandonment of the application and establishes that circumstances resulting in the abandonment of the application were unavoidable. These statement and/or evidence would presumably focus on the activities of Mr. Meeker and should include a statement from Mr. Meeker himself as to his understanding of the reasons for the abandonment of the application.

Petitioner is further advised that the delay of petitioner is only relevant in establishing that the entire delay—from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)—was unavoidable. More specifically, petitioner's actions only become relevant from June 28, 2010, forward when petitioner revoked the power of attorney to Mr. Meeker.

It is noted that the courts hesitate to punish a client for its lawyer's gross negligence, especially when the lawyer affirmatively misled the client, but "...if the client freely chooses counsel, it should be bound by counsel's actions[10]. The record indicates that petitioner freely chose to rely on Mr. Meeker entrusting him with handling the prosecution of the application. Petitioner's reliance on Mr. Meeker was clearly misplaced and unfortunate, but petitioner has not established that Mr. Meeker's alleged betrayal of petitioner's trust is the sole reason for the entire period of the alleged unavoidable delay.

Alternatively, petitioner may revive the application based on unintentional abandonment under 37 CFR 1.137(b). A grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the required reply, the required petition fee ($1,620.00 for a large entity and $810.00 for a verified small entity), and a statement that the **entire** delay in filing the required

[10] Inryco.Inc. v. Metropolitan Engineering Co., Inc., 708 F.2d 1225, 1233 (7th Cir. 1983). See also, Wei v. State of Hawaii, 763 F.2d 370, 372 (9th Cir. 1985); LeBlanc v. I.N.S., 715 F.2d 685, 694 (1st Cir. 1983).

reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Commissioner for Patents
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Box 1450
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By facsimile: (571) 273-8300
Attn: Office of Petitions

Telephone inquiries regarding this decision should be directed to the undersigned (571) 272-3222.

/Kenya A. McLaughlin/

Kenya A. McLaughlin
Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions

Enclosures:

Copy—Restriction/election requirement mailed December 22, 2008
Form PTO/SB/64